

Why Do We Worship Like That?
July 22, 2007

- I. What Is Corporate Worship?**
 - A. A meeting with God in His heavenly dwelling (Heb. 12:18-24; Ps. 100:4)**
 - B. A covenant conversation**

“a holy transaction or conversation between God and his people.”¹
 - C. A covenant meeting**

“Public worship is, first and foremost, a spiritual meeting between the triune God and his covenant people. The Father draws near to his people through his Son by his Spirit, and God’s people draw near to the Father by the Spirit through the mediation of the Son (Eph. 2:18). True worship is nothing less than communion between God and his people.”²
- II. The Regulative Principle**
 - A. Definition: “But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in Scripture” (WCF 21.1)**
 - B. Reasons**
 - 1. The Ten Commandments – two forms of false worship**
 - a. First commandment – false God
 - b. Second commandment – false way

“The duties required in the second commandment are, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God hath instituted in his Word . . . as also the disapproving, detesting, opposing, all false worship; and, according to each one’s place and calling, removing it, and all monuments of idolatry.” WLC 108)
 - 2. God’s zeal for proper worship (Dt. 12:32; WLC 110)**

I Sam. 15:22 Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams.
 - 3. Human depravity**

Our good works, “as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God’s judgment.” (WCF 16.5)
 - C. Normative principle: whatever Scripture does not forbid is permissible**
 - 1. What about depravity?**
 - 2. What about Scripture alone?**
 - 3. What about history?**

¹ D. G. Hart and John Muether, *With Reverence and Awe* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2002), 96.

² Larry Wilson, “The Real Point of Worship,” *New Horizons* 28, no. 5 (June 2007), 20.

Augsburg Confession: “its [the Roman Catholic mass] traditions were preferred far above the commandments of God”

D. Guardian of Christian liberty

- 1. worship necessarily binds the conscience**
- 2. therefore requires Biblical warrant**
- 3. lose-lose situation**

III. Dialogical Principle

A. What is the church? Called out ones

B. What is worship? “the gathering of God’s people out of this world and into his presence”³

Directory of Public Worship 2.2: “A service of public worship is not merely a gathering of God’s children with each other but before all else a meeting of the triune God with his people. God is present in public worship not only by virtue of the divine omniscience but, much more intimately, as the faithful covenant savior.”

C. Organized according to the covenant relationship

1. What is the covenant relationship?

Genesis 17:7⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Hebrews 8:10¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

2. Worship is a re-enactment of the covenant relationship

3. Covenant dialogue

Directory of Public Worship 3.1 “The parts of worship are of two kinds: those which are performed on behalf of God, and those which are performed by the congregation. In the former the worshipers are receptive, in the latter they are active. It is reasonable that these two elements be made to alternate as far as possible.”

IV. Application

A. Isn’t it boring?

B. Where’s my blessing?

WSC 89: “The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.”

C. Why don’t I get to participate?

WSC 90: “That the Word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.”

³ Hart and Muether, *With Reverence and Awe*, 91.